



Sexerati: Smart Sex

Erotic intelligence for a hotter tomorrow, by Melissa Gira.

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Blue Monday: If Sex Educators Could Make a Living Wage, Would We Sue to Protect Our Brand?

In the "Power, Corruption, and Lies" Department: on Monday, October 22, San Francisco based sex educator & author Violet Blue filed suit against porn star Violet Blue, seeking damages for violation of the trademark "Violet Blue", filed in March 2007, and to block the porn star from doing business as Violet Blue Inc.

As reported at Wired's "Threat Level" blog, Violet Blue TM alleges unfair business practices over Violet Blue Inc.'s adoption of her name and her "distinctive, black Bettie Page-style bangs." How many women involved in sex & sexuality education sport these bangs is beside the point, but really. There are quite a few. What's at stake for Violet Blue TM is brand dilution; that is, as she wrote in 2006, that journalists would confuse the two Violet Blues, or that Violet Blue Inc.'s brand would be conflated with Violet Blue TM.

Is it damaging that a porn star chose the name of someone else working in sex as her stage name? Or is what's really telling about the case that, unlike supermodels and actresses whose names are often repurposed in smut, an indie sex writer & educator's likeliest route of recourse is to file a lawsuit seeking financial remuneration? It's clear that the press have been confused by the multiple Violet's in porn question, but then, the press are more or less a mess when it comes to sex at all.

But if *the ability of the press to discern the reality of the sex culture*, and who is who within it, when such information is so easily searchable, *is our measure of how valuable our brand is*, **then a lot of us sex educators and writers are pretty fucked**. How often do they get basic sexual health information wrong? How many times have we had to pitch in substantial research ourselves? (And don't get me started on the time I was told in an interview that I invented sex work.)

Are our brands so easily watered down, so vulnerable to being tarnished? Is our work of so little value to the mass culture that we have to defend it in court? The total fail here lies not with Violet Blue Inc. being stubborn and/or clueless, or with the media who can't figure out the difference between a porn star and a porn reviewer, but with the brokenness (and brokenness) in being an independent sex educator, how difficult it is for us to support one another, and how delicate a career built on sex really still is.

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